Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Guidance
Planning guide for early years and childcare settings

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The government announced a roadmap towards recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and plans for welcoming all children back to early years settings and a phased return of childcare provision to schools from 1 June as planned.

This planning guide is intended to provide information and support for all early years providers in England as they prepare to welcome children back.

It is for:

- local authority-maintained schools
- independent schools
- independent schools
- all providers on the early years register
- providers registered with an early years childminder agency

This guide does not cover exempt settings such as playgroups, as they work in the child or children's own home.

We have published separate guidance for primary schools opening from 1 June.

This guide can be used by settings to inform plans to open more widely from 1 June, if it is safe to do so and in accordance with local plans. It can also be used by childminders first preparing to open to more children and providing a social distance service to parents who need childcare for their children. It should be read in conjunction with early years sector bodies and providers from a variety of different backgrounds who have worked together to develop practical ideas for early years settings. Settings may use the guidance to complement, and have to follow sector approaches depending on their particular circumstances. Not all ideas will need to be adopted, or adopted in the same way, depending on your setting. Where this is not possible, you should discuss with your local authority.

This guide does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities law. It recognises that businesses or employers could be complying with existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics, and that they may need to continue to do so. Settings will need to account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to implement these changes, please work with any unions which staff belong to and take into account their advice and any agreed local or sector-wide protocols.

Providers should use this guidance, they should do so in conjunction with other information and advice from local authorities and other sector bodies to help decide what is most appropriate for their setting. The guidance will also include links to other guidance, such as that for the clinically vulnerable.

- Actions for educators and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June
- Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings
- Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak
- Early years foundation stage (EYFS) coronavirus disapplications
- Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

1. Prepare the premises

Health and safety check of the building

Every site or building has been closed or partly closed for a long time and has not used for a long period. Then you should undertake a health and safety check of the premises and equipment before you welcome children back. Your usual health and safety system should be applied for early years settings. Consider whether your health and safety advice for children, staff, parents and carers and any other visitors is right in your circumstances. Consider coronavirus risks. Examples have been closed.

Risk assessments

All planned activities should be risk assessed in light of coronavirus, in conjunction with relevant staff where applicable, and due consideration given to how social distancing need to be adapted. Consider adjusting the exam processes, for example assembly points, and how you will ensure that staff are trained in them.

Cleaning and hygiene

As close face-based working will be resumed. Refer to guidance on cleaning non-healthcare settings and also the detail set out in Annexes A and B. Ensure that cleaning is managed in your setting. Please the information available to staff and parents.

Toilets, washrooms, and kitchens, the washing hands/wash hands, hand sanitiser, door handles, and tables, used during the day, will need to be cleaned thoroughly several times a day.

Space management

Consider your premises and how they can be used to keep small, consistent groups of children and staff together. Consider how you can use your outdoor space further intensively as well as indoors, if all the guidance.

Depending on the size and the layout of individual settings, consider how floor space, and outdoor space can be organised to ensure physical distancing between children and between groups of children, considering the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and other guidance requirements. Providers must meet the following ratios when supervising children:

- children under 2 years need 3.5 m² per child
- 2 year olds need 2.5 m² per child
- children aged 3 to 5 years need 2.3 m² per child

Area dividers may help to create different areas of different parts of the room, and floor space can be used to create different areas for different groups of children. Your commercial spaces in settings should be managed to limit the amount of mixing between groups as much as possible.

Smaller settings, including childminding settings, may have fewer children than larger settings and may be able to more easily keep children in a group. Some childminding settings, where family members are also present, in addition to the usual shared spaces, however settings could consider whether a specific room could be designated for children during the day.

In order to facilitate cleaning, remove unnecessary items from learning environments and other areas, such as soft furnishings, toys, and other items that are difficult to clean, and only that are frequently used, such as those with smooth surfaces. Consider how you can use your outdoor space further intensively as well as indoors.

Review arrangements for the supply of food to the setting and agree an approach that suits the setting's particular circumstances. If you use food suppliers, ensure they have appropriate physical distancing, and hygiene measures. Low risk maintained when on setting premises, and consultation this with suppliers.

Consider instances where other suppliers and contractors may be in the setting. For example, maintenance and repair contractors. Ensure they are following the relevant measures set out in place and also communicated. Consider a mutually beneficial contingency plan to minimise the impact of shortages of supplies and workforce.

2. Prepare to implement practical measures to reduce risk

Consider the measures that you should implement to reduce the risk of transmission in your setting. Refer to the guidance on actions for educators and childcare settings. Consider how you can consider staff in developing policies for setting and communicating with parents and carers and other visitors. Ensure that staff are responsibility for preparing if supplies for children to be children and children to be.

We know that, unless older children and adults, children in the early years cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. Your risk assessment work through the hierarchy of measures set out in the protective measures guidance:

- ensure parents are advised to keep children who are symptomatic at home
- ensure staff who are symptomatic do not attend your setting
- ensure children who are symptomatic follow your expectations
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

Keeping children and staff together in small groups

Keeping group sizes to a minimum of 8 children, while adhering to EYFS ratios, is a practical measure that will support the management of any outbreak in a setting, as there are no more than 30 children in a group in early years settings. Further information on planning these groups once you have worked with parents to identify the children who will be returning to your setting is set out in section 8 of this guidance.

Physical distancing between groups

While it is not expected that children and staff will be able to keep apart at school, it is important for settings to consider how they can reduce contact between groups of children and staff as far as possible. For example by ensuring children and staff mix in a small consistent group and that each group stays away from other groups.

Settings should ensure:

- physical distancing between groups of children and staff as far as possible
- that individual groups use the same area of a setting throughout the day as much as possible
- that the sharing of toys and resources is reduced
- that any toys or resources that are shared can be easily cleaned between different groups of children

Consider how rooms and indoor areas can be opened to ensure groups of children are kept together. Where possible, staff meetings and training sessions should be conducted by phone or online. Consider how you can use your outdoor space for learning tasks, including if staff make a virtue of the fact that children from different learning groups should be kept apart. Small gatherings (such as gowning in a corridor or when moving to a different part of the setting, is low risk.

Handwashing and respiratory hygiene

Ensure sufficient handwashing facilities (running water and soap, alcohol hand rub, sanitiser, disinfectant) are available for staff and children, and that they are kept stocked upon entering the setting, especially throughout the day, before and after eating and after using the toilet. Ensure that children are encouraged to wash their hands on a regular basis such as in particular and learn how to do it effectively. Ensuring that there are plenty of disposable tissues throughout the setting to implement 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. Ensure that appropriate bins are available for the disposal of used tissues. Ensure that bins are immediately disposed into bins and that these are emptied throughout the day.

Enhanced cleaning

Ensure surfaces that children and staff touch, such as taps, books, doors, chairs, toilets, light switches, are cleaned more regularly than usual by putting in place an enhanced cleaning regime, including cleaning toilets.

Ensure all doors that are accessed within the setting, for example, the front door, handwashing, and washed in line with guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings and that these items are not touched by children between washes.

Ensure that there are clear procedures for maintaining emergent cleaning procedures for food preparation areas, dining areas and toilet cleaning.

Consider and communicate a policy on bringing items and toys from home. This should be based on what is practical and what allows the risks to be lowest. Ensure that appropriate cleaning is arranged.

Reducing face-to-face contact with and between parents and carers

Reduce contact between parents and carers when dropping off and picking up their children. Consider how you can do this, for example, by using a rota for drop-off and staggering timings. Do not allow parents or carers into the setting unless this is essential, and arrange for children to be collected at the door if this is possible.

In some young children will have been attending a setting for a number of weeks or even months, and will be familiar with the routine. Ensure that you are encouraging and manage dropping off their children while maintaining physical distancing.

Avoid the need for parents and carers to wait, but where they have to, consider whether physical distancing markings could be used.

Consider how you can use technology to communicate with parents and carers digitally. For example when providing handover information at the end of the day.

Other measures

Keep windows open as far as possible to ensure ventilation, avoid the use of fire unless necessary for safety reasons, and ensure that children are not left in front of a setting and ensure they only cross the building when strictly necessary. For example if providing an essential service or essential support for a child's health and wellbeing.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The majority of staff in childcare settings will not require PPE, beyond what they would use in normal circumstances. Staff who work with children who are showing signs of certain illness (PPE) is only needed for children whose care cannot be carried out within minutes the use of PPE, or if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from any child or other members of staff. Refer to the guidance on the use of PPE in early years settings is provided in section 11 of this guidance.

Taking temperatures

Settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning or throughout the day. Public Health England's guidance is that routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying those who may be infectious. Staff should be supported to be aware of their own and their children's temperatures and to be vigilant for any changes in suppliers.

3. Reviewing your staff for availability to work in the setting (if applicable)

Contact as much is determine the availability of staff to work in the setting from 1 June in so doing, remember that you may be working with some staff who are anxious and may need reassurance and consideration. Consider the risk to staff members, including any support that may be needed for those who have been shielding or have family members who are shielding.

Anyone who is shielding coronavirus symptoms, or has displayed symptoms in the previous 7 days, or who lives with someone who has displayed symptoms in the previous 14 days, should not attend work unless they have tested negative for coronavirus.

- high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

They and their household members should follow the advice for households with possible coronavirus infection.

Staff should be tested in conjunction with the official government guidance on eligibility. People who are in coronavirus symptoms vulnerable (those who are undergoing health conditions which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus infection) should follow the guidance for the clinically vulnerable. Those who are not following shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe.

If a staff member is clinically extremely vulnerable, they are advised not to attend the setting. If a staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, it is advised that they follow guidance on people who are shielding and who live in a household.

Clinically extremely vulnerable who are not higher risk of coronavirus, for example, people with some pre-existing conditions as set out in the clinical at home and carers guidance, may be able to attend work. Consider how you can support them in observing social distancing and support each from home and support the individual pregnant women.

For childminders, who work together, but live in different households, you can still attend the childminding setting as it is your place of work.

Consider the impact of staff availability and contact tracers on staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable and vulnerable in the clinical framework for the EYFS. Consider how you can support them in observing social distancing and support each from home and support the individual pregnant women. Consider how you can support them in observing social distancing and support each from home and support the individual pregnant women. Consider how you can support them in observing social distancing and support each from home and support the individual pregnant women.

The availability of staff, as well as your own and family circumstances, may change, so agree a policy for updating your staff on a continuous basis and how you will communicate this with staff and parents.

4. Agree a protocol for responding to a suspected case of coronavirus and ensure setting is prepared

Amend your current policy or reference management to ensure your setting has a protocol for responding to a suspected case of coronavirus and ensure that staff are prepared with the resources and staffing needs to implement the new protocol. The protocol should include the following measures:

Anyone who begins to show coronavirus symptoms while in the setting should be sent home immediately and follow government guidance on what to do if you or someone in your household has coronavirus (COVID-19). Ensure that children who are being collected are separated from other people and wait for collection in a separate room.

A household should be aware if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from a child who is symptomatic and wearing disposal gloves and if contact is necessary, then a clinical opinion and a facemask should be worn. Partial assessment determines there is a risk of contact with the child's bodily fluids or mucous membranes, then PPE should be used. Refer to the guidance on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in early years settings and guidance on using PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings.

Ensure the child or member of staff who left the setting, settings should follow the guidance on travel healthcare settings to ensure areas they have been in are disinfected and any PPE and other waste is disposed of safely.

Once early years and childcare providers open to more children, all staff and children should be tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) if they have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus, and encouraged to get tested in this scenario. Refer to the guidance on coronavirus testing and how to arrange to have a test.

Ensure that children who have been sent home to carry on return to their setting and the fellow household members can be tested with no delay if they show any of the main symptoms. The rest of their immediate group within their setting should be sent home and asked to self-isolate for 14 days in line with the guidance. Ensure that children who are attending your setting or other care centre contact with the child or staff member. The other household members of those advised to self-isolate do not need to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they are in contact with subsequently tests positive. Ensure appropriate steps to disposal or disinfection or storage could be different if staff or staff with designated roles, for example parents find aid, SENCO or safeguarding lead.

As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the setting, Public Health England will contact the setting to discuss the next steps of the investigation and advise settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases a larger group may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. Ensure that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that children and staff are able to reduce risk of transmission, if the whole setting will be asked to self-isolate.

Ensure that emergency contacts are updated in advance of wider opening and consider how you will ensure that you can reach a parent or emergency contact if your child is unwell at school. Ensure that you are clear with parents and carers and ensure they understand their roles and will be available to collect their child if necessary.

5. Communicate with staff

Communicate your plans for the wider opening of the setting from 1 June with staff, including any changes to working patterns and practices, and the risk of transmission of coronavirus and their roles and responsibilities. Build in time for staff to review processes and procedures and to ask questions and raise any concerns in advance.

Ensure that staff understand that those who have previously been shielded, or who have someone in their household who does, should not attend the setting in any capacity if they are advised not to do so by their medical professional. Ensure that they are entitled to do so, and are encouraged to organise work in the current following government guidance on working factsheet.

Consider the motivation and training that staff may need on infection control, for example, washing and disinfecting and cleaning.

Ensure that staff are prepared to work with vulnerable children and parents that return to settings. For example, by providing them the appropriate local services and mental health services, mental health services, and domestic or substance abuse services, and school nurses, and children's social care services. Ensure that staff are prepared to understand what support is available.

Discuss any additional support that may be needed to ensure staff wellbeing and consider how this can be put in place on your setting. Consider how to arrange regular opportunities to get feedback from staff on the new arrangements.

6. Communicate with parents and carers

Communicate your plans for the wider opening of the setting from 1 June with parents and carers, including any changes to working practices, and the risk of transmission of coronavirus, how they require them and their responsibilities to supporting this. Where appropriate, review your policies and procedures with parents and carers and inform them of any updates you have made.

Ensure that all parents and carers understand that if a child has coronavirus symptoms, or a household member has coronavirus symptoms, they should not come to the setting under any circumstances. Ensure parents and carers are clear that they should not send their children to the setting if their child has been in contact with someone who has displayed symptoms of coronavirus and they are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.

Communicate your plans in ways that are accessible to parents and carers. For example, those with English as an additional language) and parents and carers who are disabled. Consider how you can use your website, social media, or setting out the routes to accept and receive any email queries.

A model letter to parents and carers is included in Annex A, however individual settings should modify this based on their particular circumstances.

7. Identify the likely numbers of children returning to the setting

Identify the children who are likely to be returning to, or joining, the setting on 1 June, working with parents and carers, and with your local authority, where relevant. This will be important for planning purposes. Consider how you can ensure that children are able to sustain safe social distancing and hygiene measures, and that it is clear which children are in which group, and which staff are with which group. Ensure that children are encouraged to adhere to social distancing and hygiene measures and to understand the rules.

To minimise contact between groups of children and staff, consider should attend just one setting wherever possible and parents and carers should be encouraged to consider this when making their decisions about which provision their children should attend. Childminding settings should consider how they can work with other childcare providers in a geographical area to manage necessary journeys, for example pick up and drop off to schools, to reduce the need for parents to travel with children to other settings.

If demand for places is higher than the setting's capacity when reopens to allow children to return in accordance with the government's plan, the setting's temporary cap in operation childcare providing the setting. Childminding settings should not exceed the ratios set out in section 1 of this guidance, and should be considered basis. If necessary, settings should prioritise vulnerable children and children of parents who have a key role in a pandemic response, including those contributing to disaster or Bereavement, followed by younger age groups.

8. Plan your setting's groups to reduce contact between children and staff

Audits of staff availability and assessment of likely demand for places for children who will be attending although from the current plan for 1 June, ensuring which child ratios set out in the EYFS framework are adhered to. Consider any risk assessments in place for individual children. Ensure that the ratios set out in the EYFS framework are adhered to at all times. Taking the need for staff absence into account.

Providers should use professional judgement when planning groups but may wish to use EYFS ratios to guide this. Keeping group sizes to a maximum of 8 children is a practical measure to groups as well as possible, and providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 30 children in a group in early years settings. Further information on planning these groups once you have worked with parents to identify the children who will be returning to your setting is set out in section 8 of this guidance.

Physical distancing between groups

While it is not expected that children and staff will be able to keep apart at school, it is important for settings to consider how they can reduce contact between groups of children and staff as far as possible. For example by ensuring children and staff mix in a small consistent group and that each group stays away from other groups.

Settings should ensure:

- physical distancing between groups of children and staff as far as possible
- that individual groups use the same area of a setting throughout the day as much as possible
- that the sharing of toys and resources is reduced
- that any toys or resources that are shared can be easily cleaned between different groups of children

Consider how rooms and indoor areas can be opened to ensure groups of children are kept together. Where possible, staff meetings and training sessions should be conducted by phone or online. Consider how you can use your outdoor space for learning tasks, including if staff make a virtue of the fact that children from different learning groups should be kept apart. Small gatherings (such as gowning in a corridor or when moving to a different part of the setting, is low risk.

Handwashing and respiratory hygiene

Ensure sufficient handwashing facilities (running water and soap, alcohol hand rub, sanitiser, disinfectant) are available for staff and children, and that they are kept stocked upon entering the setting, especially throughout the day, before and after eating and after using the toilet. Ensure that children are encouraged to wash their hands on a regular basis such as in particular and learn how to do it effectively. Ensuring that there are plenty of disposable tissues throughout the setting to implement 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. Ensure that appropriate bins are available for the disposal of used tissues. Ensure that bins are immediately disposed into bins and that these are emptied throughout the day.

Enhanced cleaning

Ensure surfaces that children and staff touch, such as taps, books, doors, chairs, toilets, light switches, are cleaned more regularly than usual by putting in place an enhanced cleaning regime, including cleaning toilets.

Ensure all doors that are accessed within the setting, for example, the front door, handwashing, and washed in line with guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings and that these items are not touched by children between washes.

Ensure that there are clear procedures for maintaining emergent cleaning procedures for food preparation areas, dining areas and toilet cleaning.

Consider and communicate a policy on bringing items and toys from home. This should be based on what is practical and what allows the risks to be lowest. Ensure that appropriate cleaning is arranged.

Reducing face-to-face contact with and between parents and carers

Reduce contact between parents and carers when dropping off and picking up their children. Consider how you can do this, for example, by using a rota for drop-off and staggering timings. Do not allow parents or carers into the setting unless this is essential, and arrange for children to be collected at the door if this is possible.

In some young children will have been attending a setting for a number of weeks or even months, and will be familiar with the routine. Ensure that you are encouraging and manage dropping off their children while maintaining physical distancing.

Avoid the need for parents and carers to wait, but where they have to, consider whether physical distancing markings could be used.

Consider how you can use technology to communicate with parents and carers digitally. For example when providing handover information at the end of the day.

Other measures

Keep windows open as far as possible to ensure ventilation, avoid the use of fire unless necessary for safety reasons, and ensure that children are not left in front of a setting and ensure they only cross the building when strictly necessary. For example if providing an essential service or essential support for a child's health and wellbeing.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The majority of staff in childcare settings will not require PPE, beyond what they would use in normal circumstances. Staff who work with children who are showing signs of certain illness (PPE) is only needed for children whose care cannot be carried out within minutes the use of PPE, or if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from any child or other members of staff. Refer to the guidance on the use of PPE in early years settings is provided in section 11 of this guidance.

Taking temperatures

Settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning or throughout the day. Public Health England's guidance is that routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying those who may be infectious. Staff should be supported to be aware of their own and their children's temperatures and to be vigilant for any changes in suppliers.

Ensure you are prepared

Ensure that your setting is operationally prepared to implement these measures, and that you have sufficient staff available to implement the measures. Ensure that essential products are in place, as well as contingency plans to respond to any shortages in suppliers.

9. Identify safeguarding, special educational needs and disability (SEND), child wellbeing and welfare requirements

Ensure that children's safeguarding and welfare needs are met in line with the EYFS and other statutory requirements, including those who are vulnerable in exceptional circumstances. The coronavirus outbreak may have caused significant mental health or other wellbeing issues for children, parents, and staff members. Consider how you can recruit extra free time and other wellbeing settings. Consider the role of mental health practice or wider health and wellbeing support children may need, including with bereavement, loss, or other trauma. Ensure that children who are at risk of harm, including for children who are vulnerable to exploitation, or who are at risk of harm or neglect, for children and families. Consider how you can support children who have changed and be prepared for their return to your setting.

Consider whether a review of child protection arrangements is needed in light of changes to staffing and practices in your setting. Ensure that children with special educational needs (SEN), vulnerable children, and disadvantaged children are the priority groups. Settings should refer to government guidance on supporting disadvantaged children and children with SEND. Ensure that children who are disadvantaged, support children with SEND and collaboration in other issues, discuss with your local authority or other providers of support services to ascertain whether or when these children are expected to attend and consider what your setting is facing in these circumstances.

Readjustment to the routines in a setting may pose more challenging for some children and families. Ensure that children who are vulnerable to exploitation, or who are at risk of harm, setting has been closed. Plan how to ensure your setting will ensure that they received to support children with SEND or safe others, that there is a number of staff designated to support children with SEND, and that they are able to support children with SEND and other vulnerable children. Ensure that children who are vulnerable are prioritised in planning and agreeing any changes to support, including reviewing EHC plans.

Consider how you can ensure attendance of vulnerable children and how they will support them to transition into the setting according to their needs and their individual circumstances. Ensure that children who are vulnerable are prioritised and that attendance is promoted as expected, with no penalty. Ensure that children who are at risk of harm or neglect, for children and families. Consider how you can support children who are disadvantaged. Settings should work with local authorities, and school nurses and health services, and children's social care services, and other agencies, including the safeguarding processes, and other children that are vulnerable to exploitation, or who are at risk of harm or neglect, for children and families.

The Department for Education announced the suspension of routine Ofsted

inspections in March 2020, the safeguarding responsibilities of settings have not changed, and regulatory action including visits to settings which are triggered by safeguarding concerns will continue. See Ofsted's response to coronavirus for more information.

10. Planning what children should learn and how to adapt the EYFS

The priorities at this time are helping young children to adapt to their new routines and supporting children to settle back into the setting, especially where there have been staffing changes. Continuing to support their early language and communication skills is essential. Children who have had limited opportunities for exercise should be encouraged to exert themselves physically.

Settings should use reasonable endeavours to deliver the EYFS learning and development requirements as far as possible in the current circumstances, as set out in guidance on the temporary changes to the EYFS requirements in light of coronavirus. This means continuing to provide an environment that invites learning across all 7 areas as far as is practicable during this time. Consider how stories, singing and games can be used to help children to socialise and resettle into familiar everyday routines.

Plan how children can learn in age-appropriate ways about how they can keep themselves safe, including regular handwashing and using tissues. Consider how to encourage children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition. Resources you may wish to use to help children learn are included at Annex B.

Consider new approaches that will need to be taken to minimise the sharing of resources between groups, for example for painting, sticking, cutting and outdoor construction activities, which should be thoroughly cleaned before and after use by different groups. Malleable resources, such as play dough, should not be shared between groups and public health advice is that, as sand pits cannot be thoroughly cleaned between uses, they should not be used at this time. Consider how resources can be used safely and in which circumstances and which items it might be more practical to remove during this time.

Plan how outdoor space, where available, can be used as much as possible. Consider how all groups of children can be given equal opportunities for outdoor learning, while ensuring outdoor equipment and toys are appropriately cleaned between being used by different groups.

Settings should consider how to continue to support the learning of children who do not attend settings, including how these children can maintain contact with their key person and peers through the early years setting, and how parents and carers can be supported to provide a positive learning environment at home. The Department for Education's Hungry Little Minds campaign features tips and practical activities that parents and carers can do at home with children to support their early learning. The campaign website has been updated to include a wealth of online educational resources available for parents and carers to support their child's development at home. Settings can also direct parents and carers to the BBC's Tiny Happy People campaign and the National Literacy Trust's Family Zone for more ideas and content. The Department for Education has published further guidance on how to help children aged 2 to 4 to learn at home during the coronavirus outbreak.

Annex A: Model letter to parents and carers

Date

Dear Parents and Carers,

I write to you to set out the arrangements we have made to open [insert name of early years provider] from 1 June.

Thank you.

Before I set out these arrangements, I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for their understanding and cooperation since we had to close [to the majority of children] from [insert date]. I know that this period has been challenging for many families, in particular when you have had to juggle work commitments with managing childcare, if you have children with special educational needs or disability, or if you are a single parent.

I am pleased to let you know that, further to the government's announcement that early years and childcare providers will open from 1 June (subject to scientific advice), we are working hard to take the necessary steps to be ready to welcome back all children. We will open [to more children] only if the government confirms that their five key tests justify taking this step.

Which children can attend from 1 June?

[For settings which have been open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers:

As you may be aware, we have remained open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children since [insert date] and have been operating with smaller group sizes and additional hygiene and infection control measures. We will remain open for them until wider opening is confirmed.

The government is now encouraging all eligible children to attend and it is no longer necessary for parents of eligible children to keep them at home if they can. Please do contact us if you fall into one of these groups and would like your child to take up their place.]

From the week beginning 1 June, early years and childcare providers will welcome back all children, if the five key tests set by government justify the changes at the time. For the vast majority of children and young people, coronavirus is a mild illness. Some categories of children with specific serious health conditions should not attend their early years setting. If you are unsure whether your child should attend the setting due to a health condition that they or someone they live with has, please contact us so we can discuss the details with you.

Protective measures we are taking in light of coronavirus (COVID-19)

First and foremost, it goes without saying that the safety of your child and of our staff is our top priority. We are working hard, following the latest government guidance, to develop and implement a number of new ways of operating. This will allow us to open as safely as possible, focusing on measures that will help limit the risk of coronavirus transmitting within our setting.

Some of the steps we are taking in readiness for reopening include:

[Insert all measures setting is taking for example:

- Asking that anyone who is displaying coronavirus symptoms, or who lives with someone who does, not to attend the setting. That includes children and staff who work here.
- Keeping our children in small groups with as much consistent staffing as possible, and minimising contact with other groups around the setting.
- Cleaning our hands more often than usual. We have developed routines to ensure children understand when and how to wash their hands, making sure they wash them thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered.
- Ensuring our children understand good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach and ensuring a good supply of tissues and bins throughout the setting.
- Implementing an enhanced cleaning schedule, ensuring surfaces touched by children and staff are cleaned regularly and throughout the day, including table tops, door handles and play equipment.
- Asking parents and carers to physically distance from each other and from staff when dropping off and collecting their children and to limit drop off and collection to one parent or carer per household.
- Asking children not to bring toys or other items from home to the setting, unless this is essential to their health and wellbeing.]

What can parents and carers do to help?

There are a number of things parents and carers can do to help us make these arrangements effective, in addition to the points listed above concerning arrival and departure and not bringing toys to the setting.

1. [Outline guidance on what to do if their child, or someone in their household has coronavirus symptoms and that they should not come to the setting.]
2. [Outline setting's agreed protocol for responding to a suspected coronavirus case and that they will need to immediately collect their child if they develop symptoms while at the setting.]
3. [Outline what parents and carers should do to provide reassurance to children facing changed routines and different groups.]

Testing

Once early years and childcare providers open to more children, all children who are attending a childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario. The aim is to enable children to get back to childcare, and their parents or carers not to need to self-isolate any longer than is necessary, if the test proves to be negative. A positive test will ensure rapid action to protect other children and staff in their setting.

We ask all parents and carers to ensure they organise a test for their child, in the event that they develop coronavirus symptoms, and notify us immediately of a positive test. Further guidance is available about getting tested.

Conclusion

I hope that this letter has given you the information you need to understand what arrangements we have made to enable children to return to us from 1 June. We are looking forward to welcoming your child[ren] back and I hope that you are assured that we have taken all possible steps to ensure safety for all in our setting. If you have any questions or suggestions, please let us know.

Annex B: Resources to help children to learn about coronavirus and how to keep themselves and others safe

- Professional association for children and early years (PACEY): supporting children in your setting
- Dr Dog explains coronavirus
- Busy Bees:
  - 2 metres apart activity (PDF, 2MB)
  - Our hand washing song (PDF, 958KB)
- Bright Horizons: Talking to Children about COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

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Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

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Transition period: get ready for 2021

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